New Bedford
Massachusetts

September
1915

History of the New Bedford Trade Union Movement

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PUBLISHED BY THE NEW BEDFORD CENTRAL LABOR UNION

Briefly Commenting on the Local Trade Union Movement. Together with a Union Directory and other Interesting Matter

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To the public that has kindly made this publication possible, we wish to express our thanks. We wish to impress upon the public that our demands for shorter hours, higher wages and good sanitary conditions are but just, and that such conditions for the toiler means as much to you as to them. In union there is strength, and for a happy and prosperous community there must be equal opportunity and justice to all.

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BRIEF SKETCH OF THE LOCAL TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

ORGANIZED labor is labor in its normal conditions. Unions of laborers may be traced back in European history for at least six hundred years: and it is probable that in whatever period and in whatever country we are able to find large masses of laborers thrown together, research reveals to us the germs of labor organizations. Association is so natural to man, and its benefits so great, that it is ever sought, and indeed, more and more sought with the progress of civilization. Isolation is weakness, but union is strength.

The first wide spread labor agitation in the United States reached a climax in 1835 when an effort was made to form a national trade-union, but was not successful. Organized movement of the workers continued in a feeble way until towards the close of the Civil War.

In 1845 an agitation for the reduction of the hours of labor in the factories of Massachusetts was begun and carried on until 1852, when they secured a reduction of two hours per week, from sixty-eight to sixty-six. Massachusetts and New York are the two states that stand preeminent from the very beginning of the American trade union movement.

In reviewing the industrial life of New Bedford, in so far as it bears upon the organization of the workers, we find that its history has close connection with the manufacture of textile products. The first cotton mill was started in 1849 and has increased to a wonderful degree. The employees were at that time nearly all of English descent and it was but natural that they should bring with them the spirit of organization; at the outset this was not manifest to a very great extent, although the spinners were among the first to organize.

One of the earliest and up to that time the strongest labor organization in New Bedford was the Knights of Labor, it flourished from 1885 to 1890; there were five assemblies and had a combined membership of over a thousand workers; internal troubles in the national organization affected all of the assemblies and in 1891, the only remaining New Bedford assembly "Equality" surrendered its charter.

In 1887 Labor Day was made a holiday in Massachusetts. Credit is given to Robert Howard of Fall River, a labor leader and a member of the State Senate for its passage. He was called the "Father of the Bill."

The long hours and working conditions soon bore fruit, resulting in strikes, many of them long and bitter. The spinners had strikes in 1883-85,88-90. A strike was called in the textile industry in 1894; about this time David

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Holmes, head of the weavers in Lancashire came to New Bedford and addressed the weavers on the value to them of the so-called "Standard List" such as the weavers of England were working under; this agitation has continued ever since.

But of all the labor struggles that stand out in New Bedford's industrial life the most remarkable is the "Big Strike" of 1898. After a long series of fruitless conferences the storm broke and a terrible struggle was entered upon. Over $50,000 was given by the labor unions of the country to the strike fund. Other strikes have occurred in the textile industry from time to time but none the magnitude of 1898. The textile workers are growing stronger as time goes on and today each craft has an organization, the nucleus of a more powerful movement. Other crafts have been organized from time to time, some to disband, others, the majority, to grow stronger, both in numbers and influence.

In the winter of 1903-04 the International Seamen's Union called a strike for more wages and were in part successful; they had a membership of 350 members, employed an agent and met on Water street. In 1896 the office was moved to Boston, there are but few members employed here at present. The insurance agents and teamsters are among those that were at one time organized.

Perhaps no more stubborn struggle was ever raged here than that of the Flint Glass Workers some twenty-five years ago. Another notable strike was that of the carmen in 1906. In 1910 the hod-carriers went on strike, and during the year 1912 the weavers struck against the grading of cloth.

In the nineties the Socialist Labor Party was a strong factor, but gradually lost their influence. The Industrial Workers of the World have an organization here but have not been able to gain much headway. The American Federation of Labor has grown in New Bedford and nearly all of the Unions are affiliated with it through their national bodies.

In 1898 the Central Labor Union was organized and has continued from the very first an important factor in the labor movement here. Beside this there is the Building Trades Council, the Carpenters' District Council and the Textile Council, all central bodies of their crafts.

The movement of organization among the workers has been as elsewhere of slow growth; the labor movement is human, its members after a day of toil cannot give to it their best energy, it has suffered from misrepresentation and unreasoning opposition from without and with treachery within, yet despite all this the great movement of the worker towards industrial and political freedom has never been stayed and today it is more determined, more powerful and more militant than ever before. Lessons have been learned, the mistakes of the past are but guides of safety in the future. No movement means so much or holds a brighter future than does the organization of working men and working women.

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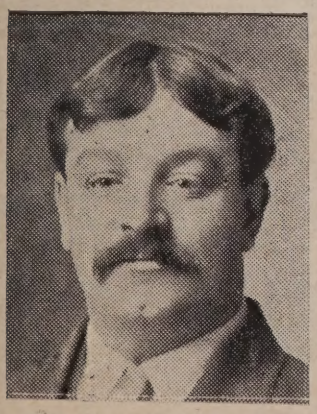

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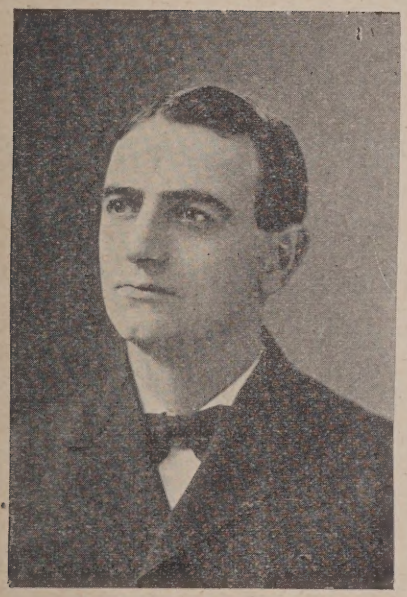

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Where the sessions of the 30th Annual Convention of the Massachusetts State Branch, American Federation of Labor, will be held, September 20-25 inclusive

DIRECTORY OF NEW BEDFORD LABOR ORGANIZATIONS

CENTRAL BODIES

Building Trades Council. Theatre Bldg., Union St.; Fri.; George Sanderson, Pres., 1181 Pleasant St.; Robert W. Carr, R. S., 113 Grape St.

Carpenters District Council. 384 Acushnet Av.; Tel. Aut. 1625, Bell, 22990; Thurs.; D. A. Houle, S., 150 Tallman St., William Nelson, B. A.

Central Labor Union. Labor Temple, 138 Pleasant St.; 2d and 4th Fri.; Arthur N. Harriman, Pres., 169 Rockland St., Henry S. Davis, S., 135 Thompson St.

Textile Council. 62½ Purchase St.; 2d Mon.; Walter Ellison, R. S. and B. A., 158 Bonney St.

LOCAL BODIES

Bakers No. 95. Labor Temple, 746 Pleasant St.; 2d and 4th Sat.; Joseph B. Holmes, R. S. and B. A., 661 County St.

Barbers No. 447. Labor Temple, 746 Pleasant St.; 3d Mon.; Philip Monty, Jr., C. F. S. and B. A., 1815 Purchase St.

Bartenders No. 100. Dawson Hall, 1851 Purchase St.; 1st and 3d Sun.; Michael H. Sullivan, F. S. and B. A., 27 Trinity St.

Boot and Shoe Workers No. 238. Labor Temple, 746 Pleasant St.; 2d Wed.; Peter F. Mulkerne, F. and C. S., 47 Thompson St.

Bottlers No. 224. Arbeiter Lieder Tafel Hall, 14 Adams St.; 1st and 3d Wed.; Fred Barber, S., 14 Adams St.

Brewery Workmen No. 197. Arbeiter Lieder Tafel Hall, 14 Adams St.; 2d Tues. and last Mon.; Albert H. Krapf, R. and C. S., 685 Summer St.

Bricklayers and Plasterers No. 39. Oliver Bldg., 384 Acushnet Av.; Wed.; James H. Murkland, C. S., 57 Walnut St.; Alfred Allard, F. S., 123 Maxfield St.

Carders and Ring Spinners Association No. 36. Spinners Hall, 832 Purchase St.; 2d and 4th Tues.; James H. Simpson, S. and B. A., 23 Ashley St., Cove Village.

Carpenters No. 1021 (French). 384 Acushnet Av.; Mon.; William Nelson, B. A., 728 Kempton St.

Carpenters No. 1287. 384 Acushnet Av.; Tues.; William Nelson, B. A., 728 Kempton St.

Carpenters No. 1733. 384 Acushnet Av.; 1st and 3d Fri.; William Nelson, B. A., 728 Kempton St.

City Employees No. 185. Labor Temple, 746 Pleasant St.; Nov. to May, 2d and 4th Sun.; May to Nov., 2d and 4th Tues.; John F. Andrews, F. S., 83 Morgan St.

Culinary Alliance. Carpenters Hall; 2d and 4th Wed.; Edward T. Smith, R. S., 181 Ash St.

Dresser Tenders No. 835 (U. T. W.). Spinners Hall, Purchase St.; 2d and 4th Wed.; Edmund H. Yell, S., 1655 Acushnet Av.

Electrical Workers No. 224. Rm. 9, Theatre Bldg., Union St.; Mon.; Clifford A. Hatch, R. S., 157 Maxfield St.; Arthur F. Gleason, Treas., 519 Rivet St.

Engineers, Amalgamated Society of: New Bedford Branch. Labor Temple, 746 Pleasant St.; alt. Tues.; Mark Redfern, S., 484 Summer St.

Flint Glass Workers No. 17 (Blowers). Labor Temple, 746 Pleasant St.; 1st Mon.; August Gleichman, F. S., 35 Fair St.

Flint Glass Workers No. 113 (Cutters). Labor Temple, 746 Pleasant St.; 1st and 3d Wed.; Joseph I. Joslin, C. S., 60 State St.

Granite Cutters: New Bedford Branch. Labor Temple, 746 Pleasant St.; Thurs. on or after 15th; James W. Grewcock, S., 12 Stone St.

Hoisting and Portable Engineers No. 135. Theatre Bldg., Union St.; 1st and 3d Thurs.; Carl F. Hayward, R. S., 197 Campbell St.; Edward McAloon, B. A., 63 Washington St.

Lasters No. 27 (B. & S. W.). Labor Temple, 746 Pleasant St.; 1st Fri.; H. E. Card, F. S and T., 210 Austin St.

Lathers No. 254. Albert LaPlante, S., 920 County St.

Loomfixers Association. Oliver Bldg., 384 Acushnet Av.; 1st Fri.; John Hobin, S. and B. A., 598 Pleasant St.

Moving Picture Machine Operators No. 334. Labor Temple, 746 Pleasant St.; 1st Tues.; Walter O. Smith, F. S., Box 379; Orland J. Bear, B. A., 36 Division St.

Mule Spinners No. 2. 62½ Purchase St.; 3d Tues.; Hon. Samuel Ross, S. and B. A., 68 Willis St., or Box 367.

Musicians Protective No. 214. Spanish War Veterans Hall, 196 Union St.; 1st Sun.; E. M. Latimer, S., 161 Middle St.

Painters, Decorators, and Paperhangers No. 691. Labor Temple, 746 Pleasant St.; Mon.; Arthur D. Charlebois, S., 5 W. Cove St.

Plumbers No. 53. Labor Temple, 746 Pleasant St.; 2d and 4th Wed.; James F. Collins, R. S., 27 Trinity St.

Quillers and Beamers. (*See Weavers No.* 13, *National Federation of.*)

Railway Clerks No. 68. Labor Temple, 746 Pleasant St.; 2d Fri.; John J. L. Evers, R. S. and B. A., 111 Merrimac St.

Retail Salesmen's Association. Sharpshooters Hall; 1st Tues.; George C. Methee, S., 102 Bowditch St.; Louis Martin, B. A., Hathaway Av.

Sheet Metal Workers No. 289. Labor Temple, 746 Pleasant St.; 3d Mon.; Herbert S. Hammond, C. S., Newton St.; James H. Nelson, F. S., 146 Collette St.

Shoe Stitchers and Cutters No. 243 (B. and S. W.). Labor Temple, 746 Pleasant St.; 2d Mon.; George D. McCarthy, F. S., Box 268.

Stationary Firemen No. 294. Spinners Hall, 832 Purchase St.; 1st and 3d Fri.; James W. Gordon, S. T., 53 Sherman St.

Steamfitters and Helpers No. 644. Labor Temple, 746 Pleasant St.; 2d and 4th Thurs.; P. R. Williams, R. S., 96 Chestnut St.

Street and Electric Railway Employees No. 673. Dawson Hall, 1851 Purchase St.; 2d and 4th Thurs.; William Beauregard, F. S., 193 Bowditch St.

Theatrical Stage Employees No. 131. Labor Temple, 746 Pleasant St.; 2d Sun.; John M. Baptiste, C. and R. S., Box 499; Harry J. Morrissey, B. A., 54 So. Second St.

Theatrical Stage Employees No. 334. (*See Moving Picture Machine Operators No.* 334.)

Typographical No. 276. Labor Temple, 746 Pleasant St.; last Sun.; Frank C. Bliffins, S., 43 Foster St.

Warp Twisters No. 874. Labor Temple, 746 Pleasant St.; 1st Mon.; William Norwood, S. and B. A., 95 Willard St.

Weavers Protective Association No. 2, *Cotton.* Labor Temple, 746 Pleasant St.; 2d Tues.; Francis J. Duffy, Jr., S. and B. A., Box 543.

Weavers No. 13, *National Federation of* (Quillers and Beamers). Franco-American Federation Hall, W. French Av.; 1st and 3d Sun.; Henry P. Martin, S. and B. A., 5 Emery St.

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